

## 8.21.08: Lt. Governor Gears Up to Put Trash Where it Belongs

Lt. Governor John Garamendi Gears Up to Put Trash Where it Belongs Instead

California's Coastline

SACRAMENTO - Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, a state lands commissioner and longtime environmental leader, sent the following letter today to the Ocean Protection Council. He is urging members to take their recently released Marine Debris Report recommendations and put them into action.

August 21, 2008

Mike Chrisman

Chair, Ocean Protection Council

Coastal Conservancy

1330 Broadway, Suite 1300

Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Mr. Chrisman:

I write to comment on the "Draft Implementation Strategy for the California Ocean Protection Council Resolution to Reduce and Prevent Ocean Litter".

I am encouraged to see that the Resolution on Preventing and Reducing Marine Debris, which I called for and the Ocean Protection Council adopted in February 2007, has brought forward such a robust and visionary implementation strategy report.

The report concisely documents the alarming increase in marine debris, the resulting dramatic and negative impact on ocean habitats, and the significant economic cost associated with increased ocean litter. In my view, the problems are so significant as to demand immediate solutions that require substantial resources. I am committed to working with the Administration, the Legislature and other stakeholders to transform the report's recommendations into reality. I intend to focus environmental and legislative leaders on the reports recommendations in the coming weeks, and will be looking for the Council's support and technical expertise in moving forward legislative and non-legislative solutions that ultimately achieves the report's goals.

I agree with the priorities set out in the report. Specifically I wish to applaud the emphasis on actions aimed at reducing ocean litter, especially the challenging and important goal of eliminating land-based sources. These are the strategies that offer significant opportunities for true success. We can not continue to play catch up, merely attempting to contain the flood of garbage being directed into our oceans. This kind of retroactive "clean up" simply dislocates the problem temporarily from one place to another as marine debris is diverted to landfills. Instead, we must address the problem at its source. We must stop producing the trash that is finding its way into the sea.

The arsenal of tools available and recommended by the report - to stem the flow of ocean trash, including extended producer responsibility (EPR), outright bans and fees on certain products - must be the standard for the future.

Although thirty three countries around the world have instituted some sort of producer take back of packaging, immediate adoption in California may prove challenging, partially because of a misperception that the policy will be too expensive and complex to administer. These fears are driven by a limited understanding of EPR for packaging. However, I believe that with education on this issue, Californians will understand the long-term benefits and embrace the approach readily, as they have with batteries, tires, and electronics.

To further the goal of instituting EPR for packaging, I recommend the OPC host a conference with representatives from countries with successful EPR programs. These representatives could describe the benefits of EPR and give us insight into the challenges they had to overcome to implement successful programs. A conference on the subject coupled with legislative hearings would help introduce the concept and provide the legislature with real world examples of how it can be done.

The OPC should adopt the Draft report. At the same time, the Council should admit that the document is a general blueprint for the future and immediately adopt a more specific action plan with firm deadlines to accomplish its objectives. For those items in the report for which legislation is a prerequisite, the OPC must identify methods to support legislative efforts to draft and adopt appropriate laws. In addition, the OPC should identify every possible non-legislative action the Council can take to achieve the goals outlined in the Report and incorporate these actions into its annual priorities.

As I mentioned earlier in this letter, I am convening a think tank of legislators and environmentalists to begin discussing the best legislative solutions to implement the Marine Debris report's goals. I encourage your support and involvement in this process and look forward to working with the OPC to make this visionary report a reality in California.

Sincerely,

JOHN GARAMENDI

Lieutenant Governor

Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi's Past Environment Record:

As chairman, Garamendi led the State Lands Commission to reject the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal off the Oxnard/Malibu coast, highlighting the plan's deficiencies in protecting the environmental health of the communities, the ocean and coastline.

As a member of the Ocean Protection Council, Garamendi developed a plan & championed legislation (Pacific Protection Initiative; 5 marine debris bills to reduce ocean pollution) to greatly decrease pollution of California beaches from plastic refuse, reducing the danger to California's beaches and marine life.

As Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Garamendi oversaw the Department's eight bureaus and helped develop national global warming policy with Vice President Al Gore and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. He also was the key negotiator for water disputes throughout California and brought the Riverside Habitat Conservation Plan to successful implementation, which protected 66,000 acres of rare habitat. It is a national model.

As a California legislator, Garamendi authored the Tahoe Bond Act (1982), allowing the State to acquire and preserve private land in the Tahoe Basin. Since then, he has continued to help lead the state's efforts to protect the quality and clarity of Lake Tahoe's water, shore zone, natural habitat, and regional development activities.

Garamendi's 32 years of public service and environmental leadership was recently recognized by leading California coastal advocates:

- Environmental Defense Center (Environmental Hero Award, June 2008)
- San Diego Coast Keeper (2007 Coastal Champion Award, November 2007)
- The California Coastal Coalition & the Wetlands Recovery Project (2007 Friend of the Coast Award, April 2007)

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